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Collaboration, Centrality, and Cultural Themes in Italian Hip-Hop: A Network Perspective

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This paper explores the evolution of Italian hip-hop from the 1990s to the early 2000s by combining social network analysis, computational linguistics, and qualitative methods to investigate how collaboration structures shape cultural expression. Drawing on a dataset of tracks from several influential albums, a collaboration network of artists has been built through Gephi, revealing distinct communities that reflect both stable partnerships and dynamic cross-regional exchanges. Central artists, such as Guè Pequeno and Marracash, tend to occupy mainstream positions within the network and thematically engage with individualism, materialism, and status. In contrast, peripheral artists are more likely to foreground themes of resistance, urban marginality, and political critique. By connecting artists' positions within the collaboration network to the thematic content of their lyrics, using TF-IDF metrics complemented by qualitative analysis, the study shows how collaboration patterns influence the type of narratives and values promoted within the genre. This approach sheds light on the broader cultural dynamics at play, revealing how Italian hip-hop navigates between local roots and global influences, and how the tension between authenticity and commercialization shapes its thematic development.

Keywords/Topics

Collaboration networks in cultural fields Network analysis of discourse (socio)semantic network analysis

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